

People would call me Iowa: Adam Hammes

Interviewee: Adam Hammes

Interviewer: Brian Campbell

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BC: So, go ahead and say your name.

AH: Adam Hammes.

BC: Adam Hammes, this is Brian Campbell. So welcome to [Mid-Americana].

AH: Thanks for having me.

BC: So, tell me a little bit about the place you grew up.

AH: The place I grew up.... It is 29273 to 92nd st. Richland, Iowa which is when they started us 911 addresses it used to just be Rural Route 1 Richland, Iowa which includes a lot of things but to double that in road northwest about 5 miles of Richland, Iowa in Southeast Iowa- sort of, most people don't know where that is but it's North of Fairfield about 15-20 miles on highway 1 look to the left and you'll see a green bend and then you'll get to Richland, so, we lived on a farm. It was more of a livestock. We had land but kinda started out like 10 acres and slowly bought up land around us, lot of farming as far of fields around us. But, it was mostly animals like we had tons of different animals growing up. The very traditional like cows and pigs to the very non traditional ostriches, hunting dogs, quail. Our family tried a lot of different things. And horses was the thing that was consistent. My dad had, raised, trained horses, quarter horses, like basically since he was a teenager. And now today that's kind of succeeded in everything else and so he just doesn't have to do much else besides having horses and now they have dogs. Um but its yeah. That was his diverse livelihood growing up as a kid. So... it started out as about 10 acres and it grew to now he has a bunch of land kinda down by the river. We live on the South Skunk River sort of by the fork of where the North and South meet. And that was it, like nothing much around roam around in the countryside did whatever we wanted there were no very few roads very few police very few people telling us what to do we would get shooed out the door in the morning and we would come back when we wanted meals. But we just play outside and we were quite a ways away from everything is where I grew up.

BC: So when you say we, tell me about like who else was there on the farm... humans and non humans you can include

AH: Yeah

BC: ...as many as you like.

AH: Talked about the non humans. My mom, my dad, I had an older sister, I **had** an older sister, and I have a younger brother. Both about 2 years apart, and i'm the middle forgotten child. For psychology reasons you could make up whatever you want about that. But yeah, that was just the three kids and lots of animals and parents and that's where we grew up.

BC: Did you have other family in the area? Is there, tell about the family.

AH: Hundreds, I mean if people live in that community and just a few country radius, I mean I don't want to Pekin high school, Pekin community schools so all of the combined but there is

Keota and singrony really close by. My dad and my mom both grew up as kids and went to Keota at some different ages. My dad I think went to catholic school when he was younger. But we were further south, but if that whole Keota Sigourney peek and triangle just the Hammases alone- lots of them. And then we were related by marriage to Webbers and Sierones and Wickencamps and I mean those families themselves are huge and so my dad , my dad had... well... he had a brother and a sister that passed away of 15 kids. He was 1 of 15, 13 still alive. And they all had kids, so those were all my 1st cousins. And my mom, her parents were divorced when she was young. She had 2 brothers and 2 sisters, on her side plus my grandpa who remarried had, i don't even know, I don't hang out with them as much but 2 or 3 sisters and brothers on that side so like 6 some 1st cousins. We would always joke that we could easily feed their own baseball team at any event, if we had a family reunion or anything like that. So, growing up most of my friends first were my cousins and after I got further along in school and got into sports and stuff I started hanging out with non family members, but, most of my life was just going down the street- talk to you- you call it visiting, the recreation was going for a visit. So we visit my aunt and uncle or any number of my aunts and uncles, and just basically show up at their house unannounced, everyone would stop what they were doing and you play cards and drink coffee or tea or whatever. Drink some Diet Mountain Dew or something depending on who's house you went to and you just stay for a couple hours. Eating, drinking, playing games, and then you're like "oh, welp, we gotta go". And so that was that. Pretty much my whole childhood.

BC: So, so these were like walking distance? You were, you were just-

AH: No, you

BC:... Kinda all over this whole area. Sounds like

AH: I'd say it's a, I mean they were within a few miles but we had the river between us. So, we typically have to jump in a car, we also owned 4-wheelers, ATV's, there were times where we had, I mean, we owned horses, so we would ride our horses to our cousins house. But that's like a weekend adventure, like a whole day type of a thing. Cause you'd literally cross the river through the woods and like get to your families house and take a big long break. So we had ATV's, horses, I think occasionally, if I ever walked to anybody's house it was cross the fields to like my friend Shane, my friend Erick and like they're just high school friends basically. Kids who grew up really near us but didn't have to cross a river to get there. And our parents- I'm not really sure they knew we visited them- until, like my friend Phil lived really close so could literally walk to his house in 10 minutes. But, it's like 20 minutes of walking and then your parents have no idea where you're at and kind of freak out. So, we didn't tell them we went to Shane and Erick's house as much until we were older. But, yes, that's how we got around, we didn't- until we could drive- we did those other things.

BC: So, I mean for you that was sort of typical Iowa childhood. Like-

AH: Yeah I didn't know anything different. And most of the kids I went to high school with grew up the same as I did and like even if you grew up in town. Richland was a town of like 500 people. But on a good day. And so, still wasn't very large and there is still only a small group of kids like our age so we basically just went to each other's homes and if we did hang out we just went and ran around outside and did whatever we could get in to, not getting into too much

trouble. But that was, I didn't know much different until I got into college, that was just the way everyone grew up around here.

BC: Yeah, well we're uh, it sounds like you have big family, you saw your family a lot, I mean what were, what were sort of big family gatherings like what when did you get together, what would characterize those gatherings?

AH: I mean... we got together a lot. There were the visits were kind of regular that's like once a week, twice a week, three times a week just depends on you get work done on the farm and you're bored and you decide to go someplace else. But every holiday was like a major family event, going to Grandma's house, and all the aunts and uncles would show up. There was literally just like hundreds of people. And the kids would run off outside and do their own thing, and the adults would stay inside and play cards, or play games or something in the garage. And just huge meals, I guess my family was pretty large because when I started getting of dating age in high school and saw like how stressful it was to the girlfriend's that I had and they would come to a family event I'm just naming off like hundreds of people and they're like 'I'm never going to remember this' like 'oh my god' like a lot of stress and I was like 'yeah I guess this could be difficult if you didn't grow up around all these people' plus they all have a nickname so you don't know who anybody is talking about because it could be using their real name or their nickname and you just grow up knowing all of that and so you don't think about it until anybody gets there. But, holidays like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, New Years... basically are just huge family gatherings until I got old enough and some other people started like kids having kids and grandkids, the family started to split up and go its own direction. The bigger it got, the huge monstrous family events.

BC: Were there, were there specific foods, food memories, meals...?

AH: I mean it's very heavy, very heavy farm food. Like, I love mashed potatoes and gravy, meatloaf, any kind of meat like it's just, they just pile it on. I actually love like green bean casserole with like the crispy onions and the cheesy potatoes, one thing that was super popular in both sides of my family were like the rolled pickles, like ham rolled pickles there is basically a pickle with ham, cream cheese on the outside and sliced up into little pieces. I mean people would wrestle for those and like soon as they opened up a container, people just like grab them and they're gone. So those are, I mean it's just, I think of it as typical, kind of heavy farm food just like, homemade- made from scratch... stuff.

BC : Did you grow a lot of food? Did your family...

AH: We, I mean, we didn't. I have memories of times we would have gardens... but we typically with the animals around, those gardens weren't very well protected like I know times we did have a garden but we.... We typically like, like right now but, we still have gardens that grow outside but it's kind of like.... Specializing in one or two things. Like lots of tomatoes, or lots of peppers, and then like go get the other stuff from the grocery store, from an aunt and uncle, making salsa got pretty popular so tomatos and peppers and stuff were like a staple. And people still grow lot of those, but we never, I don't.... Have memories of having memories of a garden but not all the time like I also remember where the garden was being not a garden, quite just as much as being a garden so it kind of went off and on.

BC: Yeah.. so did you have people in your like. You know, family members who were particularly formative. You know people who you looked up to as kind of a role model, with what you want to do with your life.

AH: I mean like, professionally.... I think I looked at all my aunt's and uncle's as role models, my dad and my mom, for some form or another, it's just like were such, it's kind of like the melting pot. Like we had such a huge family, everybody was known for something. It's like you're either funny, or smart, or you had a business, or you were the fun one, or the whatever, like everybody like there was just a thing that you just know. Like I was just a quiet kid, I just kind of like observed things and didn't love like the loudness, like how intense everything was, but I also enjoyed just being around tons and tons of people all the time. I would just quietly just quietly do it like in the corner by myself. But, professionally, everybody where I am from, most of the people own land, have a farm, or are in the trades or you know work in a related bus- like an ag. Business or something cause it's small rural Iowa. I wouldn't say anybody in our family would say I was like the start of that world. Like I worked hard, I was, I was more of an athlete. Like I would still show up, like I work for sawmills, I worked with my dad in carpentry, I worked on the farm, I did all those things, but I don't know if I was a shining star in, in it. I was just like, capable, I never got excited, I would go like run off and do sports mostly, and like with my friends. So I got really into sports and I read a lot of books. I was a book worm... so I never, I just never saw myself as a good farmer. And so, so I never saw- I never thought that that would be where I was gonna be, I didn't know what I was going to do. But, didn't seem like my strong suit.

BC: So you had a sense even early on that there was something about that world that you didn't quite fit, or you didn't see yourself there, in the same way as others?

AH: yeah, I don't know what it was but it wasn't, I mean I kind of- there was some things that I definitely didn't like about it like I would tell my, anytime we complained to my dad of like it's 10 o'clock and you're still working, and he's like- 'works'- There is always a fun saying for everything in small town Iowa and he's like 'Work's never done when you're on the farm' it's like 'when is this gonna be done' and we'd complain- he's like ' it's never done, there's always work to do on the farm' and I was like 'well that sounds terrible, like, that sounds like I don't want that like we- you can't go away for even like a small vacation- we would take like a week long vacation or something which they were like a highlight of like jumping in the car and doing a camping vacation or something around the U.s. It took a lot of work of like, we have animals and if you leave they'll die, like literally the- the reality was like we can't leave unless you find an aunt or an uncle or a cousin or a mixture everyone adopts a day. And they have to come over and like feed and water and scoop poop and liek do all the chores for animals so they don't die. And I was like 'man that's a lot of work like that's-' I respect how much work it is and I'm not sure if that's what I want to do- like- every time I take a vacation I have to like plan months in advance to get like- proxy to come in and run the farm for you. So, that was one thing I remember not loving but specifically but specifically it was because I was like, there were days, when it was like cold icy rain and it was like 10 o'clock at night and we just hadn't finished doing whatever like building a giant fence. And as a kid I was like 'this... sucks. And I wanna inside and get warm'. I was also not very good at cold weather and so I was just like 'man I don't wanna be doing this'

BC: Yeah.

AH: So those are some of the specific memories but in general it was just like probably not my strength.

BC: Uh-huh. So, tell me about some of these animals, were there particular ones that, that you had specific memories of?

AH: Oh, you've got, you've got m-

BC: If you had to pick a few

AH:.... memories of all of them

BC:... pick a few

AH: Seared into my, my brain so sure that my brother, sisters, and cousins do... but, um ostriches were- an ostrich- is fascinating animal and to see one in rural is even more fascinating and to live on a farm where they have them- it was kind of like cool but also my least favorite thing. Like, we learned fascinating wildlife biology like male ostriches when they become in mating season they like literally puff up their neck, blows up like a balloon and make these deep guttural grunting noises like 'MOOOOOO, MOOOOOO'. And they do it at night when you're trying to sleep right out your bedroom window and you just want to scream and yell like 'shut the F up' and that's like a few years of having ostriches out in the yard just not getting good sleep, being angry, lying in bed wishing they would shut up. But then they were also super cool because they are kinda like dinosaurs with these incredible like talons that can like rip open an animal and they're definitely like aggressive when they're males and they're older and it's like breeding season. So you're also kind of out there like 'no other kid gets to grow up like this' like, I'm out here like sneaking around trying to not get killed by these ostriches who are like bum[ing] up against the fence like if I didn't have this fence here like I would kick your head off and I'm like yeah I know, like it's not lost on me that I'm happy this fence is here. So there is just like all kind of stuff like that, once an ostrich got out and like literally I was like staying up at the house because I had to watch the gate because if it came back or they went off trying to catch it, and I'm like 'man, what happens when a male live ostrich is just like out in the wild, running, like what if they don't catch it, what if it runs on the highway, what if it is just living out there in the wild, like we'd never get it back'. And so, those days were fun just thinking about like I don't think ostriches belong here, like I don't think they were meant to be in Iowa. But it was pretty popular there for a while and I think some people still raise them.

BC: So did you raise ostriches just for fun? For meat?

AH: Oh for, I mean the idea I think was to make money

BC: yeah

AH: And I'm sure that there was a plan and we could have but like eggs and shells and feathers and meat- it's all in theory like really high quality stuff. But then you have to raise them and have like incubators and like take them through these like- there's just- it's not a great life cycle for a heavy bird. And they had like rolled over toes and stuff like they would fight each other they would just not- like you would set them up in these pens like I would remember once an ostrich hung it self it just stuck its head somewhere it wasn't supposed to be and freaked out and just like yanked back really hard and dropped its' butt down and just like killed itself. I mean it was just like what are you stupid? It's like, not they just don't know what they're doing and it freaked out and like you've got this long neck that you shouldn't that be poking around holes and I'm

sure in Africa or wherever they are actually from they don't have fence posts that they're supposed to be watching out for. So it's just like a crazy, it's just a crazy experience. I think everybody who's involved, probably agrees, it was a quite, quite an interesting life lesson and just like woah, like raising ostriches is Iowa...

BC: So that one didn't last...

AH: It lasted a while at least several years that we were we built a lot of fence pens and had lots of ostriches, lots of babies, lots of eggs, lots of adults. It was several several years I think that, I'm guessing like 4 or 5 at least. But, eventually it ended now we just have- those pens are now horse pens.

BC: And the horses is what turned out to be that you said-

AH: the horses has been the thing, my dad has done it since he was young- he's always known. He just knows more about horses than most people because he's lived it for his entire life and so it's raising horses, it's breeding horses, sometimes it's racing horses, but it's all the above. He's got a ton of barns, ton of pens, lots of mares, lots of colts. And has done really well, I think, I know at one point he was like the lead, he was like owner of the year up at like Prairie Meadows, for just like producing really high quality, like healthy horses that were fast and then quality breeding like really just several years of being like top in Iowa. and I think that that's an interesting life to be in. Just being in the horse business. So he's all over like Oklahoma, up in Minnesota, but now I think he's also just realizing he's happier sometimes like raising dogs and smaller, they don't- when they get hurt it's like, it's not nearly as traumatic as when a horse gets hurt. Some big animal, and we've had like neighbors dogs chase a horse into a fence and it's just like heart breaking. And also causes a lot of anger cause you're like 'get your dogs back where they're supposed to be' so. It's a \$20,000 possibly animal whose just like got chased by a \$2 dog, into a fence and it's dead and so, that's not- never pleasant.

BC: And I heard you talk before about this, I mean, it sounds like growing up with animals primarily there are certain ways you are saying you have this typical Iowa farm childhood but in another way, your farm was really different and that experience probably shaped you in some different ways growing up around animals and experiencing that.

AH: Yeah, I think when people typically ask me like what made you get into sustainability topics in general and I just kinda have to point to a ton on different things but one is I believe that and I don't know as much about crop farming, and it's different I do know that it's different to raise tens of if not hundreds of acres of just grow crops then it is to care for a living, breathing animal. It's very kind of intimate sometimes, it's kind of heartbreaking. In different ways then it is of like yes you can lose crops. But there is not like flood insurance for animals. You just, you know them, they're not pets but they're sort of- almost take on this air of like a pet that you care for and raise and most of them, we have horses that you're selling them you're not like eating them or anything. So just a different vibe on a farm where you're raising animals for many years to like, from like maturity to like keep them healthy and living. Versus like crops where you're just putting as many as you can, raising it, harvesting the next year, you know crops- a crop dying than an animal dying. And so, I think there is just like a different kind of lesson I learned growing up like taking care of baby animals, like getting up in the middle of the night when they're born. You know training them to be able to like lead and to be ridden and all those things, it's not the same kind of work that you do and learn on a farm where you're raising crops.

So, I think that had something to do with it. And that's how I would say like the difference and the difference is I just know significantly less about raising roe crops. Then I do about fun and fascinating facts about ostriches and quail and horses and pics and cows and those types of things. So... yeah.

BC: So you said that was one of the things you look back to as kind of an influence to doing the work you're doing. Like what were some of those other things that you can trace to your early years that got you interested in sustainability?

AH: Well I think and definitely came out of the, professionally I came out of more of environmental side. But, sustainability is definitely a mix of financial, environmental, and social issues. All wrapped into one, but one growing up on a farm with animals was sort of like, there is a right way to treat an animal and a wrong way to treat an animal. My dad, was probably the one that taught me the most I worked outside a lot with him. Served the right way to treat the land or the right way to treat animals and then playing outside in general, I knew, there is, I think the only studies like a Michigan Study or something that the only thing that could find in common with people who cared about environmental issues were- they were- they played outside in like wild kind of nature a lot growing up. Plus they had at least one adult role model with like a stewardship ethic. And so I had those, I played outside a lot, my dad taught me a stewardship ethic, and I would say on my, on the social side like my younger brother had a, had brain damage growing up. So he was mentally disabled and my mom was like, just like an angel, worked, she didn't have. Neither parents had a college degree but she like worked with not only my brother but worked in with special needs kids and adults her whole life and so we would volunteer to go to special olympics. Volunteer to help her, we definitely helped raise my brother. And those were things like socially just kind of realizing that you know life isn't necessarily fair in the way that everybody gets the same shake at life and some people definitely are in position they need help like they, if they don't have help they will die. And so when I heard other people saying 'They just need to try harder' I'm like, well it's clear that doesn't apply to my brother. So, something in their philosophy is flawed and they need to make room for like other situations that people aren't necessarily familiar with. So like I think socially that introduced me to just like people who struggle, different people who go through, what I consider really tough things to deal with. Having a special needs child or an adult, like it's very all very difficult, it's also very rewarding in some ways. But it's also incredibly difficult so those are just things that I got to see as a kid growing up that I would say it probably shaped me and getting me into the field I got into.

BC: So, one of the things you talked about earlier were times you left Iowa. Vacations, camping trip, what were some of those early experiences that you, where you countered this broader world.

AH: I mean first is just just started in sports camps, get into high school and my, my parents were great about letting me sign up things. So football we would actually come to Pella. Pella, Central College had football camp that was like super popular with our high school. So they would start sending us there basically every year. So we would go get to live in the dorms for what I don't even know what it was, a week, 2 weeks, can't remember it anymore. But it was like heaven, it was like a bunch of our friends who were all on the same football team would like go to this dorm and just chill out, eat at the cafeteria, walk around campus, and then get our btts

worked off playing football. But I just loved it, I remember that and my big one, I loved basketball camp. So I'd go up to the University of Iowa and play with the Hawkeye's get to meet my favorite basketball players and like getting our butts worked off playing basketball, live in the dorms, walk around campus, eat at the cafeteria. And I would remember like my mom and dad, less my dad, but like they would come to drop me off and I'm just throwing myself down in the dorm room and mom's like gettin weepy and crying like 'are you going to be okay?' and it didn't register for me I was like 'of course I'm going to be okay, like this is amazing like are you guys ready to go? Like get out of here.' and she's like 'oh my poor boy like all alone he's gonna be like so struggling' and, and I was just like this is great, ready, get out of here and go do sports. And go play with my friends. So that was the first things. And I did that all through high school. But we didn't really, I didn't travel until my sophomore year in college. Never been, never even been on a plane. And, so in college, I did camp adventure, which is a program for college students to go work with military kids, basically help them through the summer, a lot of times their parents are- they're definitely working, but also deployed and so they might not have their parents, they might only have one parent. So it was a cool program, but I, I literally just wanted to go travel and it was cheap and so I started same situation like I was going to fly to Okinawa, Japan for the first time. Mom's crying, Dad's like giving me the talk about you know be responsible and I'm just like 'What's the big deal? Like I'm just going on a trip' it wasn't until I was like on the runway looking back. Like I guess I'm going to be like 1,000 miles away and I don't know what it's like to be parents and to lose your kid and have them go all the way- like- I know I'm going to be smart and like take care of myself but they might wonder if I'm going to just kill myself or get lost. Like I don't, it didn't even register to me why they would be upset because I was so excited to get out and go somewhere. But then after that I basically travelled constantly, like, for my job I would lead outdoor trips through the university at UNI, worked in the wellness program, got my CDL, like drove 18 passenger vans and kayaks around, hiking, rock climbing stuff, but then every summer I would just be off to some country. Usually like do some camp adventure, or an internship or something. Really just started leaving and bouncing around as much as I could.

BC: So it started with just these high school camp experienced and then you seized on that in college. I mean how did you wind up, how'd you wind up at UNI what were you...?

AH: Chased a girl

BC: Yeah

AH: I mean, she's a lovely woman I was dating her in high school and then in college and it wasn't only that but it was really easy. Like, UNI, one it's a small campus, I love that everything was like walkable. I didn't, I am from a very small place, I wasn't looking to move to A or anything I like the quiet, I like the country, but I also like that I could get around in 10 minutes on campus and a bunch of my friends were going from my class to UNI, my girlfriend was going to UNI. And it was actually, I never even tried to get a sports scholarship there and I had these other schools giving me sports scholarships and I, I kind of just, for whatever reason, like I was just done. We had a really great class, like really good friends, really good athletes. We did very well in sports. Especially for a small 1A school. I just didn't ever see it being that much fun again, like, I knew I would get to travel and stuff if I played sports but I also was like, I'm going to go and meet a bunch of new people that I didn't grow up with, that I, it's just to me it didn't

seem, there's nothing about it that sounded fun. So I played sports but like I just played at intramurals and got into rock climbing and got into other outdoorsy stuff that I could travel and go do whether I had a team or not. So it was kind of like becoming a selfish individualist. I was just like, well can just leave whatever time I want and go rock climbing in Colorado or go rock climbing in California. Like take this trip to out east to go caving and I don't, I don't need anybody to do that. So... that's kind of where my head was as a kid, where I was just like, yeah, I'm just not going to do regular formal sports anymore.

BC: So you closed the chapter on that high school athlete-

AH: Yes

BC: Glory-

AH: yep, the glory days of being a high school athlete were done we had plenty of intramural glory days at UNI that was incredibly fun and the friends that I had up at UNI were also very good at sports but that was just kinda like whenever we felt like it so... that was nice. I had more freedom to just go do whatever I wanted. And also the classes I took I would be lying if I didn't look through the- I don't even know if they have this anymore- but there's a big fat program you through all the classes and at the bottom of every class it will say whether there is a field trip involved. And I definitely looked for those classes that said like 'field trip to Utah, field trip to-' you know, I went on a lot of field trips when I was in college.

BC: So you had this urge to see the world-

AH: Yeah

BC: Pretty intensely.

AH: I think it was I mean I read a ton of books when I was- I did Book It when I was a kid- I don't know if they still have that. Basically they were kids with reading with unhealthy pizza. And you get these tiny personal pan pizzas if you read X amount of books in a certain amount of time. And I would literally just like- the summer, I didn't realize the first summer when they offered to me when I went home and read like dozens and dozens of books and I came back with 4 Book It sheets filled out, and my teacher was like "Oh, I'm sorry, you have to read those during the school year" and I was just like, my first angry, "WHY? I JUST SPENT MY WHOLE SUMMER LIKE READING ALL THESE BOOK" which I loved cause I loved reading, but I was like, I didn't get any pizza. No pizza, no Book It. It was a very tainted experience, I was angry at all my teachers. But that's like when you read books it's like, oh, like there's this place and there is people over here and I just thought it was really cool and like always wanted to go see those places when I was growing up. It was nice that my parents would take us like camping, car camping basically like we would go on a weeklong tour around like the United States and visit a bunch of national parks, just do a huge loop. And while sleeping in a car wasn't my favorite, we did have like pop up tents but like just driving long distances, I still love going to see Yosemite going to see Yellowstone. Just like driving around the country, seeing the Grand Canyon. That kind of put it in my blood too, I was just like, I'm gonna take these trips, I'm gonna go travel I'm gonna see things. Yeah

BC: And then you, got into doing that for other people too. You started leading these trips for, for kids, and for-

AH: Selfishly

BC: For college students

Ah: I probably did it for me. But, I did take other people with me. But that was how I found out I could travel, like, camp adventure was 100% I was scared to teach kids, I was scared to teach swimming cause that was what happened was my freshman year in college I went home after that and worked at a factory and then in Fairfield at Nelson and then I went to the second half of the summer I went and like roofed for my good friend's dad. I would, roofing houses, and I was like- okay well I'm used to this I've done all of this before, but then I got back and my first day of my sophomore year at UNI and one of my dorm friends comes in and he's like tan, he's talking about like 'oh yeah, I went and got paid to go to Japan and teach kids swimming lessons and then I got to like spend my nights and weekends travelling around Japan, specifically Okinawa'. And he called it "the Hawaii of Japan", and I was like 'tell me more about this program' that he was just speaking of cause that sounds more fun then what I did this summer. And I actually, the end of my sophomore year came around and I was like, I was offered an internship to go down to like Texas and work in business and friend of mine George was like, it sounded like a great deal as far as making money but I wasn't excited about it. And I felt pretty bad I was like 'Thank you for getting that for me and I'm not gonna do it, like I'm gonna go to Japan and do this thing, camp at like, this camp adventure program'. And I ended up doing that 3-4 times after that just because it was so you know, it taught me how to get out there and like I did start working with kids, but I also started working with adults. I was doing an outdoor education plus I got to travel a ton. So that's how I got introduced to, it was just like, 100% selfishly wanting to go to this place and work outside instead of go to this internship in Texas and I wasn't like 'oh the children you know, later on I was like 'wow these kids are amazing' and there were like days where you were crying because like the kids were seeing you leave and you were like 'oh this sucks'. But that was way after the decision was like completely selfish. Like I want to travel and I don't want to pay for it so that's how I started.

BC: So you're at UNI, you're looking for classes where you can go on field trips and summers where you can get out of the country.

AH: Yup, the rec center was amazing cause they would, they trained us, I worked with a rock climbing wall during the week but then like we would get trained to be trip leaders and do ropes courses and stuff. But that was also like, hey we'll pay you, you don't have to pay you get to go on the trip and get paid but you have to be responsible for like these 18 people. I'm like okay that's a fair trade. Like as long as I get to go rock climbing you know. But that's, UNI, was a well for opportunity, that's what I would say about- I'm happy I went there because I did trips through the rec center, through camp adventure, and through a global health core, which is a program they have. I mean we went, we just did basic like health and safety education for like Native American tribes in Iowa and in South Dakota, for the Amish, for Latino community in the Barrio and in San Antonio, like lots of field trips. And, but I was like learning about these communities, just basic issues they face while I was getting like, I didn't have to pay for anything I just got to take trips. So that was very nice.

BC: So what do you think that was feeding when you say you were doing this selfishly, like you had this urge to travel, I mean was that you know you just wanted to see new places, was there, you were ready to get out of Iowa in someway?

AH: I mean some of it I think was that I didn't see necessarily, like not knowing what I was going to do. That nothing, I knew what I didn't want to do, I had, I had worked so many different jobs I

knew I wasn't cut out for working the factory. I could do it, but it didn't make me happy, it wasn't like a calling or anything. I worked a lot of construction, worked on the farm, worked in like multiple like sawmills, lumber mills, and things like- it was all fun but it was mostly like I enjoyed the people. Because it was like family and friends and stuff. But I didn't- I was like 'I don't know what I'm going to do but these places are pretty cool and I love being outdoors like rock climbing, camping, and back packing' and suddenly I was like 'oh there's some careers out here' for a while I was like 'maybe I'll just be like a, like a trip leader for the rest of my life and like that doesn't sound so bad'. It wasn't necessarily my calling but it was more fun and I definitely felt good at it and able to educate people while keeping them safe and teaching them skills like how to do these different types of outdoor recreation things. But, it was kind of like out of selfishness wanting to travel. I think there was still like as a young person it's nice to be, it wasn't the social media age so there was like no posting pictures to facebook back then but it still felt good to be like 'I'm going to you know this place' and it sounds cool and people might have not gave a crap but I felt cool saying it. And so there is like this selfishness of like 'Hey I'm going to go do this trip' and that sounds cool. And it was, I loved being out at most of these places, they were fantastic. I also loved like just learning new stuff. So I'm a big fan, it's kinda like while I like books, I will read about anything I don't know. But going to a place it's like reading a new book, you have to learn like okay I can't lead a trip here unless I learn the ecology, and the history, and what's safe and what's not and what's the economy like. So all that stuff is always fun because I was constantly learning new stuff but then I'd also see like, it's a different version of the same story. Like everybody, everywhere I went had an environmental story to tell a social story, an economic story, and it's like once you learn it you just see these themes that run through everything. You know like okay well they handled theirs this ways and they handled theirs this way but it's all the same stuff, so I started to see more big picture things and realize that I care about these environmental issues, I cared about social issues, I cared about economic issues and they were fascinating because I kept getting to see different versions of them play out in different places that I got to work. That was like an unintended consequence. That's like lucky maybe that I got to see all that. But typically I was just like let's go do something fun, let's go hangout, let's go see a new place, let's go recreate outdoors. Especially in the warmth, I was a big fan of islands, going to like tropical islands that was never, that never hurt. Okinawa, Hawaii, the Florida Keys, those are places I really enjoyed going. The Galapagos, Costa Rica, they were very very fun.

BC: So all these are places you went in college?

AH: In college, and shortly after- like the Galapagos, so I could run like a little line but just in college I was like Japan, Okinawa, Okinawa, South Korea, I did all those like in the states trips while I was working. So there was hundreds of little trips that were like for work. But I did my internship in the Florida Keys and then I left that internship and went straight to Hawaii and I worked there and I came back and went to Germany and then I travelled around Europe when I was in Germany for 5 months. And then I got a job going to Costa Rica and the Galapagos. So I split like 3 weeks in Costa Rica 3 weeks in the Galapagos and then the next summer I came back and I did just 6 weeks in Costa Rica. Then I went to Catalina Island... well first technically I came back I got my MBA in Fairfield but during my MBA I got, I went to Catalina, I convinced them to send me there as one of my courses, like a work study. Which was just needing to get

out again I was like 'oh man I'm dying here I need to get back and do something fun' and then when I graduated with my MBA, I went back to that program in Catalina because they had a job opening and I was like 'that place is amazing and I want to go back'. Then I moved to Des Moines and I've been here for 11 years. So, I say like 4 continents, 7 countries, like living and working in those places but I also like when I was there I would travel and see as much other stuff near by as I could. So I, in the years of college and just the like 2 years, 2 and a half years following, that was probably 3 years if you count getting my MBA and then Catalina. That I was in a lot of different places. It was literally like 4 months here, 4 months here, kinda seasonal work, bouncing around.

Brian: Wow

AH: That was it, it was very fun, you don't pay off your student loans very quickly when you do that and you don't like build up the savings or you know build a strong sense of community anywhere that you travel to. So, those were some of the reasons I decided to move back.

BC: But you described some ways that your own identity decided to shift, you know you started to be around other people who lived in this different kind of world and you start to see the world differently to in sort of patterns of all these different places you were encountering.

AH: Yeah, I would say that because I was an outdoor trip leader I often taught environmental education and the people brought, like the people that came to our program, like they brought the social and the economic stories. We learned a lot about just what their life was like and what issues that we're facing in their communities and we were teaching them the environmental truth of their community. Here's the ecology of where you're from. Here's the native ecology. And what I found interesting is like I started realizing that I didn't know any of that stuff about where I was from. Like everywhere I went to I became basically a naturalist and an educator and I could tell people about their own home and like the history and stuff and like kind of like I don't know shit about Iowa like I don't know, I couldn't tell you all of the ecological history and stuff- now I can do better. But it's like, I started realizing like I wonder like I wonder what version of this, like and I had memories from growing up that I could kind of put 2 and 2 together. But also just like interesting like I didn't pay attention to these things when I was home. I didn't pay attention to what the situation was with this or that and that started making me really curious about home for the first time. Not that I knew exactly what it might look like. Like I had this inclining that I was like 'oh man, like, part of me is interested, like i'm interested enough to like move back and figure this out and like I want to know about my own' because you, I say you, I saw the impact it has on people, they call like place based education for kids but it's the same thing for adults so like when you learn about where you're from it can have a tremendous impact because it's like shaping, it's the thing that shaped you, you, it's way more relevant and how its impacted your life directly. Versus just like going on a fun trip, like cruise to a nice island, and being like 'oh that's fascinating, how, how interesting'. It's different to provide placed education to people who are local and I was like 'Aw man it would probably do me good to go back and learn about like Iowa history and ecology and social issues and financial, economic issues. And things like that.

AH: I think curiosity for me was like, 1 it's like I didn't know anything about, like I grew up playing outside but I didn't know anything about, I could name some animals and some plants and stuff

but I didn't know anything about them like I didn't know... I wasn't a naturalist like I couldn't go tell you about the ecosystem and how it ties together and which animals are important for which reasons and which plants are important for which reasons and which ones are native and which ones are invasive and which ones are not-invasive but still probably not that great for the ecosystem. I was just like 'Oh I just thought there were fun things to play on' it was just cool to see a squirrel or a wolf or a fox and I never went any deeper and I was like 'Man, it'd be cool to go learn and like understand how that impacts what's happening today., Like the actually native ecology with bison and elk versus like prairie to like what I grew up in and what we have you know in even 11 years since. Just like, how things are changing. So that definitely ecologically interested me but also just like socially, Iowa is a really interesting place, we tend, at least when I was a kid we tended to be known as like a very socially progressive, financially conservative state. There's like this interesting balance of like a small midwestern state. I don't know if we're still looked at that way. But that was definitely what it was looked like. And I took a lot of pride in that. That's pretty great that like we're of all the midwest, like really looked at, especially with the caucuses and the presidential election cycle. We just tend to get looked at where a lot of other states who are similar to us like don't get that attention for various reasons. And so all of that fascinated me and I was interested in like learning all about it but I was also enjoying myself. So it took a while for that to sink in and for me to create a plan to move home.

BC: But it sounds like some of that really came together, like you had a- you had an understanding of Iowa, you were, you must have been having to explain where you were from, the people from all over the world, they probably had some sort of, I don't know, did they ask stereotypes of what Iowa was or how did you explain to them...?

AH: Yeah, it would kind of be, eventually it became like a source of pride, and people would call me Iowa. because I would say things like, we were in California and I was just, I mean clearly it was amazing, but we would like turn this corner in the mountains and see this majestic thing. I'm also a smart ass and people get to know me and they know that and we'll be sitting there in this just beautiful moment of just extreme beauty and looking out over this sunset or something and I go to thing, was I'd be like, lean over to somebody to somebody like 'Man this is nice, I mean it's not Iowa, but it's really nice' and they would just punch me and be like 'shut up' like 'what do you have in Iowa?' like, I'm like 'I'm just sayin, I mean this is very nice' just eluding to like Iowa's amazing and they, they're stupid for not understanding. Because the joke in California, well the joke that I have to them is like 'Well none of you can point at Iowa on a map anyway like you obviously missed geography class like I don't take your opinions very highly and this is like most people that don't know where any of the other states are. And I was just like well I don't, I don't feel bad about that, I feel like you should feel bad about that. Like you aren't smart enough to know where 49 states are in the country but I had this like ongoing joke that like Iowa is pretty great and people should like check it out. Cause, when you go on a seasonal job what tends to happen is everyone is coming from someplace else, so you're all kinda interested in being like 'Oh, you should come see me in Arizona when this is all finished we can all hang out'. And I'm like 'Yeah you should come to Iowa' and you just look at people and their like 'mmmm yeah maybe, maybe'. And I was like, 'I mean it's your lost and there is a lot of great stuff here'. And I was saying it mostly out of not even knowing just trying to be like proud of where I'm from because I didn't stick around and travel much, like I went to UNI just 2 hours from home and

then I left. So, I would say I didn't learn a lot about Iowa like where are the great hiking spots, where are the great camping spots, like where are these, there's a few waterfalls like where do you go do this, like mostly when I moved home for the last 11 years that what's I feverishly been spending my time doing like where can I go get some like good hiking cause it's just like, feeds my soul. And makes me feel- like I can live a few months off of one good hiking trip. But I didn't know really what to tell people I was just like 'you should come visit, I'll take you some places, like we'll go do some stuff'. But I didn't have a whole backpack full of ideas at the time.

BC: But its, to me that seems sort of typical, from my experience of Iowa and it's like, it is half way joking sometimes or at least halfway I don't know if it balances but... like there is a sense of pride, but also an awareness that Iowa isn't California and there's like, there are things here that are different, so.

AH: Yeah... the, I mean the obvious thing that no one I think is ever going to argue with is... there is some beautiful scenes. Like you could kind of like pop over a hill and see this beautiful scene in Iowa. Definitely, we're never going to have the ocean, we're never going to have the mountains, we don't have really big lakes. We're trying to rebrand like the Okiboji and the Great Lakes, which is wonderful- those are nice lakes. They're not the same as some other places. So it's like that's- our strong suit is never going to be that we have the, like I mean the only thing that could be our strong suit is if we restored thousands of prairie and like oak savannah, because that's what we have that other people don't and unfortunately our native ecosystem mostly is, we've gotten rid of it. But the only thing to be unique is to like be proud of where you're from and to let that stuff grow and be you know protected. Which is other states have found a good way to do that it's easier when you have the mountains because 1 it's really hard to plow a mountain. It's very expensive. So any country, any state that has a lot of elevation you know they can, they should be proud but it's not necessarily that if they could turn it into something else and develop it they probably would have to be honest. But it's very difficult to do that so you turn your mountains into tourism. And we don't have that so unfortunately we have turned a lot of our native ecosystem which is prairie and you know savannah and wetlands, very quickly into farmland, which is great for some things but it's terrible for tourism, it's terrible for like bringing people to your state to see something unique and interesting. It doesn't provide any of those other ebenefits and so that's why I would say it's joking because most people know that 90 some percent of our land is not like worth coming as a tourist to see because we developed it. And so from an economic standpoint it's not valuable for our tourism or for attracting non-Iowans who don't have life family and friends who their coming here to see. It's just a different, has a different form of value. Which is commodity crop prices. That's why we joke, cause it's just true.

BC: So I want to hear a little more about Catalina, I mean how did you- it sounds like you travelled to all these different places but that was of all the places of all the tropical islands, that was one place that you imagined spending more time or having a deeper, longer term connection. So how did you get connected with that- and tell me about that.

AH: yeah, there, so it's an arid island, it's not tropical, but it's still wonderful i love islands and the oceans and mountains are still there. It's a little drier than a tropical island. It was more so, what spoke to me was the, the impetus for it being created even was what spoke to me was the curriculum so it was a sustainability education program. A lot of the times no matter where I

went I would teach ecology but as often kind of like a side things. You, don't, you know, you're travelling you're going to do this fun outdoor thing, what else you gonna talk about- I was like well let's tell people what they're seeing, let's explain to them what they're seeing. Sustainability education on Catalina was very different where it was like yes we would take eco hikes and eco snorkels and eco kayaks and we would like learn about the ecosystem but here are these sustainability principles that were kind of like tying it all together like ecology and sustainability principles. Kind of like everything's connecting, everything is run on energy, there's no waste in nature and biodiversity is good. Those are the four, but it was easy to like tie every lesson back to the other lesson they had just had. Like tie the land to the ocean, ocean to the land but also like what they were learning on Catalina which was schools from mainland california actually teaching them about their community. Like we would research as staff the town and the school and all these issues that they were facing before they came and then our instructors would use that to facilitate conversations like "hey we just saw a lobster out there, what's the job of the lobster" and they're like 'oh pick up trash!' and it was like 'great, like who picks up trash in your neighborhood and like where does the trash go like the lobster eats the trash and poops out fertilizer what happens to your trash?' and they're like 'uh I don't know' or some kid is smart and is like 'we bury it!' and like you start these like very simple conversations that pretty soon turn into like deeper conversations because you can say like how excited were you to see that lobster and they were like 'that was amazing it was so cool I wish we saw more'. And we were like 'how excited were you to see the people who pick up your trash in your neighborhood and they're just like 'ohhh, yeah we don't really think about that.' and it's like and then suddenly these kids are like 'actually my uncle takes out in our neighborhood and I'm really proud of him' or something or 'it's a really tough job' or like it starts like very real conversations when you were just like snorkeling. Most people take the vacation to forget about their home and we would always tie it back to something very meaningful and by the end of their 4 or 5 days with us it was like 'what kind of projects could you do to make a difference from where you're from' and by that time they've talked about energy issues and waste issues and food issues and social issues like, and I was just in love with curriculum basically like just learning about the outdoors for no reason besides being able to point out a bird and name it, isn't to me that valuable but learning about it in a deeper sense that you can actually like take some of these lessons back to the community I'm like that's what I'm all about. So I was, I fell in love with the education, I was only there for a month during my graduate degree but then I went back for a year straight and then I well, they don't have that program. This tells you how much I love this curriculum, in the summer time they just have summer camp with just like archery and you know games, and so all of us all of the instructors who taught sustainability would leave. They'd come back in the fall for the school year. So we were there spring and fall. So I spent a whole year there after I graduated with my MBA. Thinking that I would probably just like get in with that company because it was started by the Cousteau family who you know invented scuba diving, Jaques Cousteau and his son John Michel like created this curriculum called ambassadors of the environment. And that was their first lot location, and they serve like super diverse kids but then they took it off to a cruise ship and the Cayman Islands, Ritz Carlton, and they were basically trying to get to these wealthy like decision maker kids hoping that they would like make better decisions in the future. But our instructors were kind of like social activists, environmental

activists, people who like stayed put and wanted to serve these lower income schools that were coming out. So it was a pretty unique environment but I love getting to work with basically Jean Michel Cousteau and his sidekick Richard Murphy, was on the boat with the Calypso, with Jaques Cousteau, and they were like super, they were heros of ,ime basically growing up. Loved talking with them about issues and sustainability, and then ended up like convincing me that I could move back to Iowa and start something similar besides or move to the Cayman Islands and work on the Ritz Carlton or something. And I was like that didn't- sounded fun- but didn't call back to me, like coming back to Iowa and creating something for here. So, that's when I decided to switch and come home.

BC: So you have, a memory of when kind of like when that crystalized for you?

AH: Yeah, 100%. We, we proudly had some adult beverages, we were training, and so richard murphy who's called murph and Jean Michel Cousteau, they don't- like they're just off doing their thing- they're pretty famous and they go places. So when they would come it would just be like for the training, for the staff, it would be very short term. And so they would come and like towards the end and everything when we were about to go on this big bike trip. They were basically like, came out for this staff training and hung out with us for like a week-it might have been less. But, one night after doing a really hard training and then having some beers we like went down to this cabin right on the beach and we were all just like sitting around on like bean bag chairs like basically asking them questions like- cause some of us- not me as much but some people were like upset. They're like- why did you go to a cruise ship and like why the Ritz Carlton, and they're explaining their philosophy of like 'I get it, yeah we want everybody to have this but if we're gonna change the world like we decided what kind of people do we need to be reaching. And it's like well, decision makers, lie people who are making decisions that impact thousands of if not hundred of thousands, like senators sons and like people who are gonna probably have a higher likelihood of running for politics, or owning a company, or they're like- it sounds like a shady thing to do but like that's what we decided to do with the limited amount of resources we have. And they're like so sorry for like that was they're answer. And it was very honest so people were like 'okay well, what about this and what about that and-' and I was just like 'it seems like you're really targeting kids' so my question was like, 'is it working, like do you just think people are gonna, enough old people are gonna die and then the next generation is gonna like make better decisions?' and they just kinda, again super honest he was like 'to be honest, that, that's what we thought' and he was like 'it's not working, these kids they'll come and they'll have a great experience but it's- 100% if they go home and their parents don't support what they've learned, they don't have fertile soil to grow in'. He's like 'So we're actually kind of stumped.' He's like 'we don't know what's next' he's like 'but we really need to change adults minds. And he's like 'That's kind of a new thing for us, we thought we would just like age out these old ideas' and he's like 'it doesn't seem to be happening.' I was like well, 'I've had this crazy idea like what if you like go back to like a city, do like an urban program but you target adults and it's like sustainability education for young professionals' and like, he's like 'yeah, sure, great' he's like 'we need people who like have real jobs and understand this stuff so they can like impact their companies' and blah blah blah. So like "I think it's a great idea' and I was like 'Oh shit, that's my idea like that's the thing I was thinking about was like if I move back to Iowa there didn't seem to be any corporate sustainability jobs so I was thinking like if I can't be a

sustainability director or something for a company like would want to do something around something around sustainability. Like, So I was, had non-stop ideas in my journal, it was one of the only ones that seemed to like maybe pan out and when Richard Murphy said 'yeah that sounds like a great idea what we're doing isn't working. It was kind of like a ;lightbulb coming off and I was like'woowwww man, like, kind of wish I hadn't asked that question because it was really easy for me to be like oh that would never work that's a stupid idea that's a dumb idea like whatever. Just go to Cayman ideas and work at the Ritz Carlton that'll be super fun'. So that was the night like it just like kinda like stuck in my head that that would work because somebody I looked up to and was pretty successfully said it was a good idea. And I was like okay well, guess I'm gonna give it a shot. Like i'll move back to Des Moines. Because Des Moines was the only place that I thought I could like find a job and I had a part time job like when I would leave in the summer, I needed a place to go so I moved to Des Moines because I found a ropes course- polk county- extension- ISU has a ropes course and I like basically got to run and create a corporate program program that they had, they like used to do it with like kids and middle schoolers and stuff. And I was like, we've done this with adults and with really good results like why don't we create a program targeting adults and they were like sure, come help us do that. So I had one part time job like ready, and then the rest was like, I don't know I'll figure it out when I get here. And that's when I came, and decided like, ope I'm going to do this bike trip at the end of the winter season and I'm going to move back to Iowa in December and just like try to make a go of it. And that was specifically if Richard Murphy hadn't told me that I probably just shrunk away from it and gone another cool trip- probably to the Cayman Islands.

BC: Wow.

AH: So, that's when I decided to come home.

BC: Cool. Do you want anymore tea... or anything?

AH: I'm starting to get dry I would love a tea. Just a refill even.

Interruption

BC:-That night on the beach, that was urban ambassadors, kind of you've been writing about it in your journal, thinking about it. Kind of think about like,

AH: Do you want me to be saying stuff or does it matter, do you want me to say it like in front of the microphone?

BC: Say it into the microphone, so yeah, so- I didn't even, I didn't know before that this idea of the ambassadors was rooted in that Catalina curriculum.

AH: Yep, So I was, when I was in Catalina I was like taking photos of everything- I was like I had access to the curriculum- I still have access to a lot of their lesson plans, I was just like- man I like this, here's an example, I knew it wouldn't translate directly but I was like, this is the kind of stuff. And I specifically was like going to take this ambassadors of the environment curriculum and try to apply it in an urban setting cause like over half of the people in the world now live in cities. And I was like, well then we need something to educate urban adults. And so I was just like well I'll just steal the name- Urban Ambassadors not of the environment because it's too long so I was just like let's just call it urban ambassadors and I didn't know much much beyond that, I was just like going to be sustainability education for adults. And that's the idea, like in all

of its granularity there was very little in place. But when I came actually spent a whole year thinking about it, journaling, getting access to like University of Iowa has a foundation with like bi-laws for non-profits and things. So, a year went by and the same group of staff were going on their end of year bike trip down the coast of California and I just called them up like 'Can I come,' I was like 'I wanna get out of here, like I want to go take a trip, and so I went and I wasn't an instructor like I was staff and then again, but I like pulled out- Kent, Kent Newman took him with me as a friend. And was like 'You should video some of this and like introduce some Iowa people to the concept.' And like I was studying for my LEED AP which is just like green building certification- super tough- but I was like at night in the tents I was like reading this giant manual and then also journaling about like what could Urban Ambassadors be. Cause I've lived in a des Moines for a year like, trying to figure out what it would be. And basically I learned that someone like me who is super passionate about sustainability knew exactly what I wanted to do, had like it would take me months to find out that an organization existed that was doing that thing and I was like- like it's hopeless like if I can't find it and I'm looking for it by name, like that's terrible. I was like 'So okay, first step is that we're going to try to kind of be a clearing house for all these sustainability organizations and introduce young professionals to the movement through cool events that would educate them a little bit but it's more like fun music, drinks, networking, but like a fun activity like hosted with a non-profit that we could introduce them to this industry, this whole green building they didn't know about or this whole recycling industry they didn't know about or this whole alternative transportation kind of like biking and busing organizations'. So we were really just like starting as a mapping organizations we want to be like a one stop shop for sustainability. And that was it, and then eventually we started projects because it was more fun to do like fund projects so we started creating things and then handing them off to other organizations like 'hey you should run this because we want to go create this other thing' so it was just- we call them seed projects and so we started creating new stuff like what's missing in Des Moines is one of our motto's and people would tell us and we would be like 'great let's start it'. And we would get a bunch of people together, a bunch of organizations and we would start that thing, get it going and hand it off. **1:30:31** basically like an, little start up in June but for community projects.

BC: So, so you moved back to des Moines, you had this idea. But it, it took sounds like at least a full year for that to come together. Yeah, and you had

AH: Yeah it wasn't overnight. So, here's what I did for a year- I had a part time job at the ropes course, there was some indoor stuff we could do too so it was year round but it was pretty potty in the summer. So I knew that wasn't enough and so I went and got and certified to substitute teach so I could do that and then eventually I was like- this isn't like- this is terrible basically. And Even though it wasn't a better situation, like I loved doing the ropes courses, it was outdoors, it was in the woods and stuff. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that there were insurance jobs always open in Des Moines, we're the insurance capital of the world. So I was like, I'm- I talked to a bunch of friends I was like I went down to nationwide and there was a 3 month training- where school is never a problem for me I'm a bookworm, I take tests very easily, I memorize stuff and forget it. Doesn't bother me. So I was like, I'll go get trained to work in insurance but I knew that they had once the training was over like 3 months of training, I would be able to have like a late shift so I got an 11-7 shift and I had a steady check every 2 weeks, it

was a cakewalk to go in and do this insurance job. So I didn't, I never thought about it, all of my waking hours and like even when I was daydreaming at work it was about Urban Ambassadors and I would spend the first 4 or 5 hours of every day working on it, and then I would work 11-7 and then I would work on Urban Ambassadors. So I just took an insurance job for 2 years to like get me to start this thing. then , I got so tired of it, I was like, I know can go over- no I started at IMG that's right. And then I was like, I know I can go to Nationwide and basically take a different 3 month training, paid, and get off the phones cause it was just like a bunch of like phone calls and stuff and I was like 'I hate this.' That's basically 3 months off from the phones and I can like just relax a little bit and like get back to some sanity and then during that 3 months this job at Kum and Go opened and literally like day 11 got put to the phones and I went to my- at Nationwide I went to my boss who trained me and I was like 'yeah I got a job at Kum and Go as their manager of Sustainability I'm going to have to put in my 2 weeks' and she was like 'oh congratulations don't worry about it people do this all the time' and I felt super guilty because I like even came here knowing that I was just looking for a break. But it worked out very well because during those 3 months I had found this sweet dream job and got hired at Kum and Go. So that was my life like, it was 100% volunteer run non-profit, the board was- got pretty big and we had a ton of members and volunteers. But it was just like a passion, like a work of passion. Like we were all just young enough, didn't have family or kids yet, so we were all just out there doing stuff. Kind of moving and shaking and having a lot of fun. And then, I got a job. But that's where Urban Ambassadors came from and it's still around and their still doing a great job of plugging people of the community into these sustainability organizations which those intended to do. I don't think they do nearly as many projects because people are older and have families and it's hard to do all that stuff for free when you're married and have kids. But, it worked out there for about 5 years.

Bc: So, so what was it like being a you know young, single guy, no kids, moving back to Des Moines. You had this idea this would be a place you get a job which sounds like that part played out according to plan. But, what was it, what was Des Moines like. What was it like moving back here.

AH: Well, I mean, to be super- to be brutally honest, des Moines was not- if I didn't have that ropes course job I would have not moved back. Because it was exactly something I knew how to do, I loved doing it, I loved working outside. And I got to work with like adults and corporate groups, which was one thing I was interested in. but that's the thing that allowed me to come here. When I was a kid Des Moines was my least favorite city in des Moines. Probably like Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, definitely in college I enjoyed Cedar Falls and Waterloo but mostly just like you're on campus a lot. But Des Moines I would go there for high school, state. It was like wrestling stuff when I was younger and like basketball and football and stuff. Like, as you got in a sports you come to Des Moines for things. And I was just like, this is not a good city. I don't like it here, I don't have fun, you know maybe it was better when you were older and go to the bars and things. I was just like, not a fan of Des Moines. The job allowed me to come here and I heard good things about it. But it was really all I spent my time doing was finding sustainability organizations to volunteer for and to see if there were jobs and to see if I could like help you know create this education program that I wanted to create. Man, I even went around the state like visiting environmental camps like education camps, like the YMCA in Boone in up in

Strawberry Point, hoping that would want to adopt some of this ambassador of the environment curriculum. But really I was just like finding in Des Moines like oh these organizations exists they just don't have any money for marketing they don't have a good website, nobody knows they exist. It's like 7 or 8 people trying to do all these great things. And so, that like kept me busy and I didn't think about it, like I didn't go out to the bars very much and when I was younger I definitely don't want to give the impression that I didn't party, I didn't drink, but when I moved back to Des Moines the only thing on my mind was like figuring out a job and starting this organization. So I didn't have anyone to go out and drink with. And I didn't move back here and have any friends ready to go. I didn't really know many people. So I basically was kind of a loner just like going to this event going to that event, I was meeting people but it was weird cause I didn't know them, I just like met them at a thing. And so I wasn't going to invite them or invite myself to their house or, so I just felt like I kind of stopped, without even knowing it, I stopped drinking, I stopped going out to the bars, I stopped going out trying out restaurants, and all I really tried out was sustainability organizations.

(Small break here)

BC: So, Des Moines you were just focused on starting up this non-profit, this vision of sustainability education, and you were going through this process similar to kind of what you had done when kids were coming from Catalina, you're learning, like what were you learning about Des Moines, what were you seeing differently than other people who lived here for a long time. What were you, what were you excited about in terms of that sustainability education?

AH: I think the difference for me was that and event today what I see is people when you move to Des Moines, especially young professionals, the thing you're interested is not what I was looking at. People were most interested in what are the fun things to go out and do? More like socially? We go ax throwing now and we've got Dick's skate chambers and you know go karts, that's the kind of thing people want to know and where are the restaurants at, can I go find good food that I want to eat, like, the parks maybe, like maybe that's the best crossover for people that want to go to the park and jog or something. And I was looking for like where are the green building non-profits that are providing fun outings or education or helping you do things in your home like where are the transportation where are the biking organizations like I was learning about the des Moines biking collective that was just starting. So I was, I was fascinated by that and it was actually more exciting to me because at the time Des Moines didn't have the best restaurants and didn't have the best outings and stuff. But I was having a lot of fun, I was like oh, not only was I going out and learning about these organizations and trying to map them and introduce new people to them, but I was hearing from them like hey next year we're already in the process of doing such and such, so like this cool thing is going to happen next year. And I'm like oh man that's going to be so cool when that comes to des Moines I can't wait. So I would get this likelist of cool stuff that's going to happen. Even though I promised my mom I was like hey I'll be here for 3 years tops or like minimum like I'll definitely stay for 3 years I'm not going to move. Cause she was always like, you should come home and be closer to family. But I honestly thought that 3 years would probably go by and I would just be gone, again. But every year I started learning about new things and I started working on my own stuff with Urban Ambassadors and that just became too exciting to think about leaving. Like when I thought about going somewhere else and there were other offers there were other opportunities to go places, I

was just like oh man, but next year we're going to have like x, y, and z. And possibly like I worked on that or possibly like I know people who have been working on it for years. I really want to see how that kind of unfolds. So those are the things that started keeping me here. Like I was interested in keeping these cool community projects that were popping up. **1:42:08** And so then I would tell people about that like hey Des Moines cool did you know that this is happening where as most the time they were like yeah but is there any good Chinese places or things like that. To me that's how I started to love Des Moines, I saw more of the behind the scenes community activism and a lot of really progressive stuff that was starting to happen. And now that's lightyears ahead of where it was 11 years ago. Like the beginning that was the only thing keeping me going, some exciting projects happening behind the scenes. But that's why Des Moines started to take on like ooo like I could, I could be proud to be there. I could be, call this my home, you know have access I was two hours from my mom and dad, I'm all my cousins and stuff like I'm not that far away plus we've got an airport like I can go on vacation. The cost of living, is a lot better here than other places that I've been. But if I hadn't found something fun and exciting to do for a living, I don't think I could've stayed.

BC: So tell me about some of those exciting projects I mean what kind of stuff was Urban Ambassadors doing that you were most proud of, most excited about?

AH: You know, it wasn't always Urban Ambassadors but some of the stuff that would go longer term, like we would create, we created through this photoshoot that's like recreation of a German photo that's super famous in the transportation industry. They did it in this little village looking down a clock tower it was like a bus with 40 people, those same 40 people on bicycles and those same 40 people in cars on one street and what that looks like. And it's like a visceral feeling it's like oh wow like, traffic sucks and those 40 people could be so much better served by some buses and some bikes but we created that in the East Village with the capitol in the background and the East Village, cityscape kind of framing really well. In this weekend trip, it took a few months to plan, but it's like we put it all together did this photoshoot with a professional photographer in scissor lift and everyone went into the Continental because it was like 110 degrees outside and we like drank beer and listen to Jason Wall Smith from the Natas pay for us. So it was like this sweet event, people loved it, and then we like shared these photos like world wide, they went all over the place- not only the United States but in other countries. And it was just like, that was super fun and we knew that we wanted these photos to get into magazines and get into these other transportation organizations. We wanted them to use it, like the dart bus system, we wanted to use them at the bike collective. And so we were just like we want to, like this is so cool like we want to make sure that like that happens, and the plans we made come to fruition. Now it was only like a couple month project then we had something like solidarity microfinance that we worked on for like 3 and a half years trying to bring the Gramin Bank which is like a micro-lending for women in poverty group out of Bangladesh. They came to the United States and we wanted them in Des Moines so we were doing all this ra-ra-ra meetings, strategic planning, getting partners, and then it came down to like you needed a 6 million dollar kind of fund to bring for real like actually Gramin Bank. With a Muhammad Yunus or like okay well what if we do our own version of that, same rules, but we start with smaller pilot program, we don't have to raise 6 million dollars. So it's like that whole thing took like 4 years and from day one I was really excited about it I was like we could have this here, so I didn't want

to leave until we had it, and once we had it well I want to see it give loans to these women, and I was like I want to see these women's businesses take off. It's like you kind of just like get invested in it and you're really proud and you want to see it keep happening. So that's more like a long term project that took us quite a while to get off the ground with tons of help. Like we didn't do it ourselves, but we spearheaded the whole thing and got it started. So that's 2 very different, one pretty small short term, and one pretty long term. That keep you interested in the future of what's going to- I wonder what it's going to look like next year.

(Break right here for Annie to go out, what a good dog)

BC: So you were working on Urban Ambassadors and it was the same, same time when the Kum and Go job opportunity came along. Tell me how you wound up at Kum and Go.

AH: Well, there were no jobs that were titled corporate sustainability at the time that I showed up first in 2007. And then when this job posted actually had a friend who now runs his own farm, Tony Thompson, and he told- he's like this job got open and I'm thinking about applying for it. Would you think about putting in a good reference for me. Because he knows I had helped Kum and Go start a green team like 2 years prior and help was just like met with a vice president and one of their staff who had taken this green business course at the University of Iowa. I just gave him some direction, here is what I would do for Green Team and why. And I also told them hey be careful as a volunteer group you could burn out if you don't have like a budget and a plan and 2 years went by and they kind of felt like they maybe burnt out and didn't have a budget and a plan so they wanted to hire a manager of sustainability. I put in a reference for my friend Tony and on the call they had said well why haven't you applied for it. I was like, well I read the job description and it sounded like you're just looking for someone to work on certifying green stores and like that's great but I don't want to just work in the construction industry. Like I want to work company wide. And they were like, well, trust me, like we want it to be company wide too we're just not sure what the- maybe we didn't write the job description as well as we could've maybe you can give us some guidance on that but we definitely thought that you might be applying so we were wondering where your application was. So I called Tony back up and I said 'hey, I feel like a jerk here is what happened on the phone call.' He was like 'oh don't worry about it' he was like 'whatever happens happens' and so I did end up applying and I had gotten my Lead certification, my Lead AP, that was one of the things I was studying for, and so it helped. But- the reason I got hired I would say is because 1 I went to work at the insurance companies, so I had a corporate go to work everyday sort of job on my resume where everything on my resume was go play outside and have fun. So I know if I hadn't been in the insurance world for those 2 years I probably would not have gotten the job. And then also I had spent so many years working in the community that my boss at the time, the vice president of construction you know hired me, said he had never had so many letters of reference and recommendations for a single person cause I went to, it was the only job that I had seen, that I had wanted in the entire Central Iowa region. And so I went to every single person I knew that did anything, and said if you know someone at Kum and Go and would be willing to give me like some positive words, anything, please do. And so apparently a lot of people who worked with me in the community on Urban Ambassadors did know people at Kum and Go and had like been saying things positively and so, I got the job. I don't know who was against or what, the other, what the competition looked like but I would say, that I was told, because I had the

insurance background- they thought of not hiring me because I just had a bunch of really fun sounding stuff they were like, is this person going to be able to stay in an office for more than a year, and 2 that I had a ton of references in Des Moines and throughout. So, that's how I got hired and it was really opened ended it was like a free agent. I definitely had- the goal was to get Kum and Go with as many certified to start getting all our stores certified in the LEED program, leadership and energy and environmental design. But outside of that it was kind of like, help us create and define what sustainability is for the company, what do we already do well, what should we measuring, all those things and I just got to- as a retailer in 11 different states, I just bounced around. Literally, like physically was travelling to different markets but also going from department to department. Learning what they were doing and why and what their goals were, and trying to align those with some early sustainability goals, which was super great experience for me. Like that's, I couldn't have asked for anything better. And that's, so that's how I got the job and what I got to do when I got there. That's the- it was quite a transition, I had to really back away from Urban Ambassadors, I couldn't just volunteer as the president anymore so I stepped down and transitioned just as a board member and really was like an advisor at that point.

BC: So, you were looking for a while for sustainability jobs in Central Iowa and Kum and Go is the first company, what does that say about Kum and Go, I'm sure lots of people respond with surprise. I've heard people say that when I'm talking about you.

AH: Well I think, well, yeah going for a convenience store I think people immediately, some people didn't know that I , and we've talked about this, some people didn't know that I like my goal was like corporate sustainability-like I when I got my master's in business I really wanted to work my dream job was like a corporate sustainability director. And, because there were no jobs like plan B was start this education organization because it would be just as fun and exciting. And I had a long history of sustainability education but i- this was always the plan, I was always looking for a corporate sustainability job. and , convenience store was not what i thought what I thought also would happen. And, it was perfect because it was like, well, if a convenience store is interested in this, which I give my hat off to Kyle Krauss for wanting to create a position like that, it was rare in this market and in Iowa. Definitely in Des Moines area because I had been looking but it also was just the freedom to go do that and look across the company and to try to shape something that would be good enough for like a corporate program and then create the measurements and projects underneath each of those and you know the future of reporting that to the public. It wasn't what I expected and it was also the [perfect thing for my career and for the education learning, like the experience I was looking for. Why that happened, i know that Kyle's wife was an influence on him. She was definitely a long time environmentalist, Im sure that she influenced him but he also had the foresight to say we could be the first convenience store in the country to have a manager of sustainability and so that's, I'm super grateful that happened.

BC: yeah, so what were some of the challenges of doing corporate sustainability work in that type of business?

AH: I think, I mean the challenges for me specifically, cause I was there for 3 and a half years was the lack of experience. Like, the naivety, is that how you say it? I was naive, I definitely knew how these things worked and why they worked, like the business case for them. But in

general like reading case studies and studying it, working with people, but like having to be the one being responsible for doing it and finding how this particular company- like I knew nothing about the inner workings of a convenience store chain, let alone a privately owned one with specific market to the Midwest. I spent the first 6 or 7 months just- I had a amazing boss, John Feldman was the VP of construction and he was just handing me books left and right like you really need to learn the convenience store industry, you really need to learn about retail, you really like need to understand this stuff. So that you can align your recommendations with our business model and I was like that's super smart and yes. So I was like mostly diving into the convenience store world while also moving myself around the company as much as possible trying to learn about what's marketing focused on, what's operation focused on, what's IT focused on. There was 3 different departments real estate, now there's 4, it's like real estate, site development, construction, and facilities. Like all kind of working differently. So it was just the difficulty was learning the business that I was in to then apply the things I knew to that particular business not just some generic company. And so that was a challenge and I think personally there were some challenges to like- I had no problem with it but people I worked with who didn't know that this was like my dream job like oh you selling out going working corporate for a gas station. I'm like, what do you want- my response was always like what companies do you want to change. Like, do you want just all the companies that stay the same, like I'm happy I'm working with a convenience store because if we can find a solution here you should be able to do it everywhere else. And it's like so I got to go work on alternative fuels, I got to work on green building, energy, stormwater management, lighting issues, like convenience stores have just as many social issues kind of hovering around them and the community as they do like petroleum issues and stuff like that from the environmental side. So it's got to learn a lot of things and get introduced to kind of organizations and experts and people in our company, people in other companies, all working on the same stuff, but it was, there was blow back in the just the environmental community. Like oh you know, like what could you possibly do that's good there. And it's like, well I could show you like, here's how much energy you saved across 40 stores, here's how much water we've saved, here's how much fuel we've saved, like just millions and millions of stats about when you solve something at a convenience store, that you have 440 convenience stores just like it, the benefits rack up pretty quickly cause you can do these rollouts and suddenly you've got 40 stores, 150 stores, 300 stores, all doing this new thing when you only had to figure it out at one. It was a really nice model to work in. I just saw Casey's has a website and on their sustainability page which is new, it says hey w are doing, we are partnering with Pepsico recycling at this many stores and these particular markets. And I was like I know those markets because we created that program with Pepsico and then gave them permission to go use it like nationally with everybody else. But I worked for 2 and a half years on that recycling program. And now people like Casey's are adopting it. And it's like that's the impact that I get to see, is some things that you do, if you do them well they can have that lasting impact and keep being used long after you're gone. And I have been gone since 2014 from Kum and Go so, you know that's nice to hear every once in awhile that those things are still happening.

BC: So in addition to the recycling what are a couple things that you're most proud of. That the company should be most proud of, from those years.

AH: Well we became the first and only convenience store certified in LEED volume program which places Wells Fargo and Verizon Wireless and Starbucks and stuff. People who build a lot of similar size stores basically you certify your documentation like how you design and build your buildings which is more difficult than certifying a single building, but once you go through that lengthy difficult process, and spend the money to get it certified then you just have to prove that you continue to use the same design process. So we went through that and then we certified 80 some stores before I left and I know they certified more that after I was gone because we were in that program. So I'm very proud of that being the first and only, leading the first and only convenience store in the world to becoming LEED Volume was something I got to do. Creating one of the only large scale rollouts of recycling at the pump for customers, that's something I got to do. Stormwater management was just kind of boring but we got to test some really cool stuff even here in Fairfield, Iowa with bioswales and protecting stormwater, protecting local streams, and Kum and Go was very open to that because they also needed to go to markets like Boulder, Colorado who are demanding things like that and like expecting it versus a nice thing to do. And so I just got to work, those were the things I just like was most proud of, but we had a whole- a whole program for retrofitting older stores to a certain level that we were working before I left was like working towards maybe we would have like our own green standard it wasn't going to be LEED because we couldn't retrofit the stores to be a LEED store but we could have like a list- I mean we had like a whole list of like these are the proven energy water and waste programs that we could be rolling out. And so I had a checklist of every store and like whether they had the roll outs or not. And that was exciting because I just like to build systems and I was like then you can measure the difference you're making. So, I was very proud of it, I gotta do a ton of things and learn a ton. And then I also got to start teaching at the University of Iowa, they allowed me to do that like moonlighting as an adjunct faculty for the MBA program- teach CSR and sustainability. I also wrote a book, my first book, *Stress free Sustainability* while I was there. I basically just couldn't go do another full time job but I could do the little side projects. And I was grateful for that because eventually when I decided to leave it was to create the Iowa sustainable business for them. But I had a lot of connections around the state with companies already that were doing sustainability and that was my intent to leave Kum and Go and find a really good place and then help more companies. Help dozens of companies in Iowa do sustainability so I think that's worked out pretty well.

BC: So a lot of what you did, when I hear you talk about about the Urban Ambassadors, Kum and Go, as well as the Iowa Sustainable business forum, this idea that there's something about- there's some potential in Iowa and in the Midwest that's really there with sustainability but maybe isn't being fully realized or people just don't even know- you know like they don't know that so many non-profits or businesses are doing this. So that's part of the Iowa Sustainable Business Forum and the work you've been doing since Kum and Go it's really helping to connect those dots and help people see that.

AH: I would say that if you look at any of the stuff I worked on it tends to be, it's that similar thread where I like to look at big picture stuff and kind of raise awareness first about you know what's already happening and plug people into that and like what's missing. So you've heard from the Urban Ambassadors start of like hey let's just map out all the great things that are happening that the people don't know about. Let people know about them more, and then from

that exercise we will start seeing well; there's actually kind of a gap here, we could be doing more over here. And then it might not sound like it at Kum and Go and at any corporate program which I've now written a book on *Sustainable Business in Iowa* part of creating a program is that same big picture thinking where you-

(Break here)

BC: What have you learned in this work you've been doing, like what have you seen in Iowa that other people might not see.

AH: I think Iowa there's no lack of interest or kind of willingness to do the right thing if people see that the right thing makes sense. And, there are special things about Iowa where you know economically we keep energy prices low, we keep water waste low, we do that to bring businesses here it's an economic development strategy, but it does make some of the stuff harder like investing energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, those things are not as easy when things are cheap. And so people look at California or look at the East coast or Colorado and they say well it works there they must just care more. That's not true, the people who do it are doing it not because they care more but because the ROI is much better. And so, there's probably people who don't care as much but see the ROI and do it for the money. But in Iowa, here are people who see the ROI and isn't as good and have been more creative- more progressive- more interested in going out and doing the right thing and have shown and have case studies of like 'this works, but you have to do it this way'. This works and here's how, and you have to be a little more careful about how you do it and ask the right people the best way to do it. And so, my intention just in any other work I've done is really to shine a light on the good stuff and let people know here's what worked, here's some examples of what worked, and ask them yourself why it worked. Like you can ask them, they can tell you most Iowans are very nice and their very interested in being like yeah here's how I did it if you want to do the same thing more power to you. And so that's what I think is possible in Iowa is just being more careful to go find those success stories and then lift them up. I don't think Iowans respond well to being told what to, or being told you have to do something, but if you see something that's successful and if you're interested in it enough, you're curious about it, then people who do care about with will go do it. But they'll wanna research it and they'll wanna know themselves and probably not want a mediator, they want to ask directly like hey you're the guy or gal who did it, what did you learn, what would do differently and so I spend a lot of my time just trying to find those success stories, and Iowa Sustainable Business Forum that's all it is, is we tab businesses telling businesses how they were successful and why it worked, what was the business case for being environmentally responsible;e what was the business case for being socially responsible. That's how we did it in Urban Ambassadors and honestly it's how we did it at Kum and Go, lot of stakeholder engagement, lot of looking at what we have already done in the past, looking what some sources are that have been successful at doing, and then sharing with other stores. It was really about finding what works and shining a light on that, less about telling people what they should be doing just because you know you have to have- there's a few stages in the influence process that you have to go through to adopt these sort of things. It's just like taking the time to work with people and kind of change management approach to let's make sure people have the information they need but they understand why this is happening they get on board and ask all the questions they want to ask, get those questions answers, then let's do this. So that works

really well in Iowa and I think that's what's ripe for Iowa, we've got a lot of success stories that aren't being told, and lift up- make it visible people will stop asking why are we talking about this, and they'll start asking, how do we do that. And that's a big shift from why do I even, why are we wasting time talking about this to like tell me what's the path like what did they do to get there and that's what I want us to flip from.

BC: So can you think of an example that flip path thing with a business or you know like give me an example of something you've been apart of or you've seen that transition or that next step.

AH: Well I was told I mean this, I'll go back before some Kum and Go days I was told by someone in a meeting their like 'I sat in a meeting with the Pizza Ranch, you'll never guess what I heard today, Pizza Ranch is putting Solar panels on one of those stores and they said why are you doing that no one else in your town is putting solar panels and and I'm like I saw Kum and Go on the news for putting solar panels and I know if their doing there must be a business case so we started researching it and we're looking at putting solar panels on our building'. And that made me feel really good inside, it takes a trusted actor like you have to do it successfully and it has to be the kind of person that other people look towards as an example if it's some sort of French things, those people are losing money for all I know. But he was like "well I know if Kum and Go is doing it, it's not crazy. That there's a reason so we started looking into and found a good ROI for this particular store'. So that's an example trying to lift a particular group that's influential enough that other people want to follow them or if it's like Casey's you know creating a little friendly competition never hurts of like hey, Kum and Go is getting a lot of interest, one of our best stories of Kum and Go is I got asked to go down to Fayetteville in Arkansas and pitch a closed bid situation against Casey's where we didn't get to see what the other one was bidding but we did give a presentation about the company and like why they should sell that land which was city land to one of us and which one- and Casey's talked about their donuts and pizza and how great their community kind of like their people are. And we talked a little about hey here's how many jobs we'll create and this is our philosophy as a company. But I spoke probably for half an hour about our social initiatives, our philanthropy, our volunteerism, how we support the arts, how we support local community initiatives and also like all put environmental initiatives, sustainability wise, stormwater management, light management, the fact that we even said the word bioswale was mentioned by the fact that you even know what that word means gives me hope that convenience store knows what a bioswale is. And they opened up a bid and Casey's bid was like \$20,000 dollars higher than ours and they still gave it to Kum and Go 100% because of our social and environmental programs because they wanted that type of company in there and I'm not saying that Casey's doesn't have that, but in that particular meeting we were able to tell that story and they didn't. And it literally got us a piece of property that we hashed for that would not have existed had we not had a sustainability program. And who knows what that's worth, probably millions of dollars in the long term because of the profits one store that it can bring into the company. That was an amazing story that we got a lot of traction out of internally with why sustainability is important and why we should keep on working on it for our people. So those are things that happen, like you have to have the good stories to get people to like see something in it for them and want, like oh I'd like a little of that for myself.

BC: yeah and stories of like you said not outliers but iconic Iowa businesses whether its Pizza Ranch or Casey's

AH: It helps much more if it's like yeah that's a respected, well-known company, who I think highly of, versus some other French thing who is maybe doing it for all the right reasons and has a business case but could be easily dismissed. And not even the curiosity isn't even there to ask them why did you do it. They just put them in a bucket and say oh thats- I'm not interested their probably doing it for all the wrong reasons or something. Not to diminish what that group did I'm just looking for what causes the most change on a big scale in Iowa, like go look at the Ulowa sustainable business forums website and look at all the logos on that front page are very well respected very successful companies in Iowa and people know who they are and they respect them and probably have family members who work for those companies, and that's my goal. Everyone's allowed the more bigger brands and the well-respected groups we can get on there the better it does for everyone because that's just more interested people to come to the table to share those practices.

BC: So you've been back in Iowa 11 years when you look out into the future, when you think you know 11 years from now or like what do you see, what do you- has those businesses continued to make that transition. What gives you a sense of-

AH: Oh, 11 years a long time, I hope, I mean, even in 5 years I think that we're going to see- so here's a very small microcause example, we had we as being the state of Iowa, West Liberty Foods was the first zero- or they're landfill free certified facility. And that was just the West Liberty Foods Facility then they went and certified all of their facilities even out of state in Utah I think they have some others now. But that was several years ago, they were our, one of our first founding members, telling the story for a long time and that got everybody interested in how did you do that. PDI, Perishable Distributors of Iowa, which is a subsidiary area now of Hi-Vee became the first zero waste, but that's probably because they heard about, you know, they saw there is 2 different certifications but there is zero waste certified facility and now they have a couple facilities beyond just their Ankeny warehouse. And I can tell you at least 5 other companies are actively trying to pursue one of those 2 certifications because we've had those 2 companies telling their story to Iowa Businesses over and over again about it's possible, here's how much money they're saving, plus the certification itself gives them a ton of marketability with their employees internally and recruitment but also with partners and business partners who want to do business with them. So, I feel like in every area we've got we're just kind of highlighting some of these companies who have taken it kind of as far as you can go. Like zero waste, net zero energy, there's a term called water neutrality that people are working on now that Central Power has been working towards. They have some offices here in Iowa we're just kind of finding the best of the best of the best and the more we tell that story we start hearing 4 or 5 companies in Iowa saying like Oh, that's kind of what we are going after that's a fit for us, we wanna be the next zero waste or landfill free company, so even think 5 years from now we're going to have like 4 to 5 times as many companies that are being recognized for some of these bigger certifications. But in 11 years what I want to see is these programs being company wide like zero waste is great but what celebrity foods is also certified SA98000, SA8000? It's actually a really kind of obscure one that doesn't get used a lot but it's for social responsibility and they're starting to start a really cool wellness program that they're working with University of Iowa. And it's like they're taking this well known waste program and building out an even better sustainability initiative that's balanced and probably going to be a leader in the state in multiple

areas and that's what we want to see like frontier co-op in a lot of areas. We're going to have companies that are zero waste and net zero or water neutral and zero waste or winning more wellness for employees safety and wellness programs. That's what I want to see is just Iowa companies being recognized at the highest level for multiple types of programs within their 4 walls. We're already getting some of that now and I think it's going to be 4 to 5 as many companies 11 years from now.

2:21:22

BC: So earlier you talked about you know, half joking about the things you'd be proud of you know share with somebody who's not from Iowa, we might not have mountains or big lakes or beaches I mean it sounds like you're proud with some of the work you've done with businesses, but you've also been you said you know kind of rediscovering home and learning about where you can find of feed your soul. Outdoors, other kinds of you know social and environmental connections, I mean what are the things when you think about now and the future that you're most excited about that are places that you've kind of rediscovered and be excited to share with people?

AH: Well, my wife and I bought a book called the 25 best day hikes in Des Moines and so we've literally gone to almost every park in the greater Des Moines Metro and kind of Central Iowa and found some really good, really close hiking that can just be literally, you go for a nice hike, now those are more out of convenience and some of them are very nice like Brown's Woods and things. But having that is one thing and we're finding that I'm in love with the Luss Hills, just west of here kind of near Sioux City and then little Sioux, we actually needed to go back and I've been really starving. I really want to go to the Little Sioux area- to 2 or 3 different places, 2:22:59 but also the caves at

BC: The Maquoketa?

2:23:10

AH: Yeah Maquoketa, the Maquoketa caves even when you drive in, it's this really obscure kinda small places like what's the big deal and then you kinda walk back, you park and you walk back to the sort of like trail that goes down and off this little bridge and you realize there's this huge opens up into this kind of ravine kind of bluffs on both sides, really beautiful amazing caves and I was blown away by Maquoketa and I definitely wanna go back there. There's up in Northeast Iowa I've been really wanting, it's just a long drive, so I haven't gone yet, we wanna get all the way into Pike's Peak State Park right along the Mississippi, I love going to the like Mississippi like towns there's I don't know it's just nice to have your own big river and have some cool stuff to be in the town like Muskatine has cool stuff like Burlington has cool stuff but Quad cities. I just think that mostly I love hiking so I would say Ledges is really close to us, it's not- it's only like an hour and a half to 2 hours for us to get to the Loess Hills and then Maquoketa is maybe 2 and a half hours. And those are kinda my favorite places to go. My dad still has his farm and there's beautiful like property down below on the river that's fun to just drive through on 4-wheelers or we don't really walk that much but we'll go take like an ATV ride, all that stuff is wonderful. And I will never lie, the- I love being in a low cost of living place that we can afford to take trips- hop on a plane out of Des Moines and Oxana, my wife and I, we got married in Maui and we just did our 2 year anniversary in Kauai. And for all I care we'll go back there every year for every anniversary we should go back to Hawaii just cause it's different. You

know, you can't get that here, you also can't get Iowa over there. It's like, I- the thing that I'm most interested in kind of like long-term, I would love to be able to help more restoration, getting more prairie more oak savannah, more bison more elk more of like Iowa native land. Return to its' native state because that's why- it's one of the reasons why Loess Hills is so beautiful, its like that's just Iowa. And it's really what it used to look like. I don't know, it could still look like that, some places could easily turn back into that. Doesn't have to be 2 hours away, could be within driving distance of anybody in the state- I think you should be able to go to a beautiful Oak Savannah next to a prairie maybe see some bison and some elk and like that should be a goal of all of us. To be able to access that because that's truly our history and that's where we come from, so I would love to see that happen.

BC: Well thanks so much for being on Mid-Americana

AH: I, it was very enjoyable, we don't talk about this stuff as much as work so it's fun to talk about life and history and things that I used to do and I don't remember half of it sometimes- it's nice to take a walk down memory lane.

BC: Yeah, thanks.

AH: Thanks Brian.